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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3052
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 1792
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2746

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000948

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [FR](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH FULLY SUPPORT ARAB LEAGUE AGREEMENT ON
LEBANON

REF: STATE 52061

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4. (b), (d).

¶1. (SBU) We made reftel points to the French MFA Syria desk officer Jean-Christophe Auge May 16 and passed relevant parts of press guidance and extracts from the May 15 Department press briefing to DAS-equivalent for the Levant Ludovic Pouille and others in his "Lebanon cell." Auge, who noted Foreign Minister Kouchner's statement of support for the Arab League agreement announced May 15 (see para 3 below), said the French MFA had been very interested in knowing whether the USG had publicly backed the plan in full or had expressed any reservations.

¶2. (S) Auge reported that, although Kouchner has reaffirmed his "availability" to participate in any dialogue among Lebanese leaders, he had no intention to crash the discussions set for Doha. As the GOF has publicly stated, the Lebanese, with the Arab League's support, needed to take the lead in following through on the implementing details of the six-point accord. We asked whether the recent events had in any way changed France's view of Hizballah and possible readiness to designate it a terrorist organization unilaterally or at the EU level. Auge replied that France had no illusions about Hizballah's nature but was not currently "reflecting" on its policy of maintaining a discreet and limited dialogue. He did not foresee any move by France or the EU to designate Hizballah or take other actions against it on terrorism grounds. (Comment: It was clear from the context of Auge's remarks and Kouchner's statement that France considers the end of violence and prevention of further clashes that might result in a total breakdown of order in Lebanon as its top priority vis-a-vis Lebanon. We have requested a meeting with Pouille for next week to discuss the situation in more detail following the talks in Doha. End comment)

¶3. (U) Following is the official English text of FM Kouchner's May 15 statement following announcement of the Arab League agreement in Beirut:

Begin text:

Paris, May 15, 2008

Statement by the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs

LEBANON

I salute the agreement just reached in Beirut to end the crisis * an agreement under the auspices of the Prime Minister of Qatar and the Arab League that marks the end of the violence that has plunged Lebanon into mourning in the last few days.

Since the beginning of the crisis, France and the European Union have condemned the acts of force and supported the Arab League,s mediation.

I welcome the return to normalcy on the ground and the reopening of Beirut,s international airport.

I would like to reaffirm France,s support for Lebanon,s institutions, particularly the Lebanese government and army. Their efforts to maintain Lebanon,s unity, stability, and sovereignty were decisive in creating the necessary conditions for ending the crisis.

This evening,s agreement is in line with our approach on a non-exclusive dialogue, which we have always championed as the only possible way to put an end to the political and institutional deadlocks that have for too long paralyzed the Land of the Cedar.

France calls on all parties, both inside and outside the country, to make all the necessary efforts to ensure that the discussions beginning tomorrow will swiftly lead to a presidential election, the formation of a national unity government, and the drafting of a new electoral law.

France, which has spared no effort to promote such a solution, naturally stands ready to support the dialogue under way.

End text

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